

One-hundred-and-seventy-four House Republicans warned House Speaker Nancy Pelosi Monday that they won't vote for the Defense Department's spending bill if a hike of the debt ceiling is tacked on.

"Unfortunately, there seems to be pattern developing this year of using legislation that supports our men and women in uniform to pass other contentious proposals that are extraneous to our troops," the Republicans said in a letter to Pelosi.

"House Republicans stand ready to help the majority enact a defense bill that meets the need of our troops, but we will not assist your effort to use the troops to enact an increase in our national debt limit so as to finance the irresponsible spending of your party," they continued.

It's a stark threat from Republicans, who are generally supportive of funding the military and one that could throw passage of the massive spending bill into jeopardy.

The legislation is a moving target, even among Democrats. House Democratic leadership has announced plans to attach infrastructure projects onto the must-pass legislation, in addition to the increase in the debt ceiling.

Members of the conservative Blue Dog Democratic caucus said last week they wouldn't vote for the bill if a debt ceiling is not accompanied by a measure to statutorily limit the ability of Congress to add on to the national debt. Some liberal Democrats oppose any bill that would provide further funding to the Pentagon as troops remain at war. Without the support of these two blocs, Democrats would likely be short of the votes needed to pass the Defense bill without Republican help.

Republican Reps. Ron Paul of Texas, Walter Jones of North Carolina and John Campbell of California did not sign the letter, a Republican aide said.